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ABSTRACT

This monograph presents a summary and analysis of case study reports on three highly used tuition assistance programs. The programs are those of the Education Fund of District Council 37 of AFSCME; Polaroid Corporation's Tuition Assistance Plan; and the Education Opportunities Plan of Kimberly-Clark Corporation. The case studies describe the historical background and design of the programs, how they function and are accessed, how well they meet the purposes of users and sponsors, and what factors seem to account for worker use rates well above the national norms of 4-5 percent of those eligible. Discussed are the main features of these three highly diverse tuition assistance programs; the elements common to all three programs and their operating environments, as well as salient differences; requirements for and limits to the broader implementation of the promising practices and support arrangements contained in these programs; and an informed assessment of what the experience of these programs tell about the role tuition aid can play in meeting education and training needs of workers and employers. (KC)

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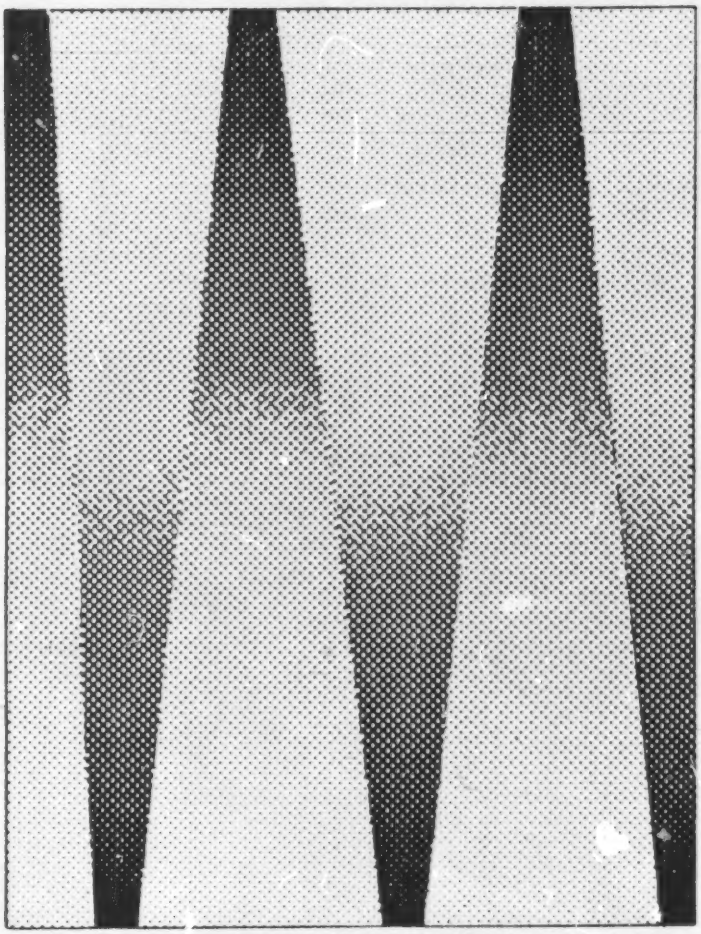

Tuition-Aid Revisited: Tapping The Untapped Resource

CE 028 404

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Willard Wirtz

September 1979

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This report is one of a series of case studies and policy research papers produced during the second phase of "A study of the Use of Education and Training Funds in the Private Sector." The name assigned the second phase of the study is the Worker Education and Training Policies Project. The research reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (Project Number 400-76-0125). Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their professional judgement in the conduct of the project. Points of view or opinions stated do not, therefore, necessarily represent official National Institute of Education position or policy.

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PREFACE

In the pages to follow Willard Wirtz, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the National Manpower Institute,presents a summary and analysis of case study reports on three highly utilized tuition assistance programs. These programs are: the programs of the Education Fund of District Council 37 of AFSCME, Polaroid Corporation's Tuition Assistance Plan and the Education Opportunities Plan of Kimberly-Clark Corporation.

The case studies examined here were initiated nearly a year ago. They were undertaken to shed new light on tuition assistance, a small but growing part of what has been called "the shadow education system": the intramural and extra-mural education and training sponsored by business and industry. Specifically the case studies describe the historical background and design of the programs, how they function and are accessed, how well they meet the purposes of users and sponsors, and what factors seem to account for worker use rates well above the national norms of 4 percent to 5 percent of those eligible.

In "Tuition-Aid Revisited: Tapping the Untapped Resource" Willard Wirtz traces the main features of these three highly diverse tuition assistance programs; examines the elements common to all three programs and their operating environments, as well as marking the salient differences; identifies requirements for and limits to the broader implementation of the promising practices and support arrangements contained in these programs; and provides an informed assessment of what the experience of these programs tells us about the role tuition-aid can play in meeting education and training needs of workers and employers.

"Tuition-Aid Revisited..." and the three case studies are the first in a series of reports on promising programs and practices and critical public policy issues in worker education and training initiated under the National Manpower Institute's Project on Worker Education and Training Policies. This project is funded (under contract) by the National Institute of Education and has received important advice and direction from Ms. Nevzer Stacey, NIE project officer. The project is guided by a national advisory committee of business, industry, labor and education officials whose names and affiliations appear on page i of this report.'

Gregory B. Smith
Director
Worker Education and
Training Policies Project

TUITION-AID REVISITED: TAPPING THE UNTAPPED RESOURCE

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I. INTRODUCTION

For about twenty years now the frozen notion that going to work means an end to schooling has been thawing. Adult and continuing education have become common terms. The median age of post-secondary education students has been rising. Salted by a new employer and union interest in "tuition aid" and worker education programs, there is prospect for a melting away of remaining barriers to bringing real educational opportunity to the adult period of life.

Five years ago, only one in every hundred Kimberly-Clark Corporation employees eligible for the company's tuition-assistance program used it. This year, the participation-rate figure will range, for various groups of employees, from nine to fifty percent.

At the Polaroid Corporation, some 6,000 employees, half of the eligible total, are enrolled in company financed in-house courses in reading, writing and arithmetic, in technical or management training, or in external courses leading to college or advanced degrees.

Each week, several thousand employees of the City of New York take academic or technical training courses arranged by District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; the necessary funds, to the extent of almost $2 million, are provided by the city under its collective bargaining agreement with the union.

Although these are unusual cases, they by no means stand alone. Available data indicate that between 5 and 10 million employees in this country

are eligible now for one form or another of tuition-assistance under programs developed either by unilateral employer action or through collective bargaining. The annual commitment of corporate funds, at least on paper, is estimated at between two and five billion dollars.

Conventional thinking about inter-relating education and work has been centered largely on what can be done to prepare young people for work while they are in school. A broad new dimension of possibility opens up if serious consideration is given to making further opportunity for formal education and institutionalized training part of the employment relationship itself.

More than employee interests are involved here. Such "external" education and training programs may well represent a sounder and more economical way to meet part of the employee development costs estimated by representatives of American management as amounting to something like $100 billion a year. There may be here, too, implications of considerable importance to educational administrators whose largest concern today is about current and prospective declines in enrollment.

These facts and figures have, though, another face. That five-to-ten million estimate of the number of employees eligible for tuition-assistance is almost mocked by the report that something like 3-to-5 percent of them are using it and that only a fraction of the corporate funds committed to these programs is in fact being spent. There is both curiosity and concern about the apparent gap here between opportunity afforded and opportunity taken.

In 1977-78, at the encouragement and with the support of the National Institute of Education (Department of Health, Education and Welfare), the

National Manpower Institute made a preliminary study of the major collectively bargained tuition-assistance programs. This study confirms and expands other evidence of a rapidly broadening coverage of such programs. (See Lusterman, 1977, AT & T, 1977; Bureau of National Affairs, 1978.)

The conclusions reached by the group of five NMI researchers (Ivan Charner, Kathleen C. Knox, Allen E. Lebel, Lawrence J. Russell, Jane E. Shore with Herbert Levine as senior project consultant) are reflected in the title of their report: An Untapped Resource: Negotiated Tuition Aid in the Private Sector. Although the study includes no specific finding to this effect, the data there appear to warrant the conclusion that even the generally accepted 3-5% use rate conceals the probable fact that most of the use of these plans is by higher paid employees and that the use-rate among hourly rated and production workers is probably about one -- perhaps between one and two -- percent.

The 1977-78 NMI report contained, nevertheless, much more of positive than of negative evidence. The concept of employer-supported education emerges with increasing persuasiveness as being firmly based in a combination of mutual interests, with the difficulties that have arisen being identifiable principally as matters of working out the mechanics of effective programs and of making necessary adjustments in various conventional practices and attitudes. Perhaps most significantly, the preliminary study disclosed a number of plans that are proving sufficiently successful to warrant further analysis of their replicability.

In a second phase of this study, also proceeding under National Institute of Education auspices, the inquiry is being extended beyond tuition aid alone

to make it an exploration of the possible potential of broader forms of "worker education" -- formal education and training that is employment-based rather than being part of what has traditionally been considered the student stage of people's lives. S rong emphasis is being put in this second phase of the NMI study on identifying the reasons, whatever they may be, for the sharp differences between the offering and the acceptance of these employer-financed opportunities.

One approach to this question has involved looking carefully at the three programs which have already been referred to. NMI reporters Kathleen C. Knox and Jane E. Shore from the 1977-78 team and Leslie A. Rosow have looked closely, with the full cooperation of officers and employees, at, respectively, the Polaroid, the District Council 37, and the Kimberly Clark records, and have prepared full reports on what they found.

In attempting to draw these three reports together, they are first summarized separately; some apparent parallels and divergences in the three cases are then noted; and there is comment, finally, on the possible general implications of these particular lessons.

II. THE THREE PROGRAMS

Kimberly-Clark

The original Kimberly-Clark tuition-aid program, set up in the late 1930's, was modest: employees providing proof of satisfactory completion of outside courses in job-related activities were reimbursed to the extent of half of the tuition costs. From 1938 to 1973, the annual average of eligible K-C employees using the plan was about one percent.

Today that figure is over 30 percent. Almost a third of the company's 7,000 employees eligible for a now drastically revised and broadened "Educational Opportunities Plan" (EOP) use company funds to participate in a wide variety of courses, many of them not job-related in the ordinary sense. Under the "KimEd" component of the EOP, employees have the option to either receive payments in advance or be reimbursed. Payments, covering all costs, are not dependent upon educational performance; no questions are asked regarding grades or even course completion. In addition to the financial assistance provided, the company offers paid educational leave of up to two weeks a year to employees when circumstances require it.

The Kimberly-Clark story since 1974, when the revised plan was first instituted, is essentially one of a corporate act of faith carried out with characteristic managerial efficiency. Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer Darwin E. Smith decided that outside training and educational experience for company employees is good for them, good for the company, good for the community. Given this top-level impetus and support, the program was worked out with as much care as would go into developing, manufacturing, and marketing a new product line.

It is probably relevant that Kimberly-Clark's success in this particular venture parallels its broader record during the same five-year period; 1978 was its seventh consecutive year of record earnings, with sales jumping that year by 11% and earnings by 14%.

The EOP is designed as a flexible package including a number of benefit options for employees and their families. In addition to the KimEd component, which provides financial assistance to employees for personal self-development through educational activity, the plan includes a broader "FamEd" program under which the company provides funds for education taken by employees, their spouses and their children. Since FamEd funds are available in increased amounts to eligible employees who themselves make contributions to an accumulating educational "bank account," the FamEd program provides opportunity and incentive for employees to save for future educational expenses for themselves and their families. The FamEd component of the EOP is the most popular part of the overall plan, showing the highest rate of employee participation.

The innovative design of the EOP includes a fairly complicated formula system for determining the size of individual employee "bank accounts." KimEd accounts range from about $400-$500 per year, for each eligible employee. Factors taken into consideration include employee performance ratings, economic need as determined by salary level, the degree of the individual's interest, and company earnings levels.

The plan, managed by a full-time administrator at the company's headquarters, is overseen by a high-level three-member EOP Committee, the chairman of which reports directly to the chairman of the board of Kimberly-Clark. A network of "Unit Coordinators" oversees EOP implementation at the local plant

sites and provides information regarding the plan and various educational opportunities to K-C employees. Broad use is made of company bulletins, benefits statements, and a variety of annual or semi-annual announcements regarding the plan and its provisions. An extensive computer system stores and provides data on employee participation by unit, types of courses taken, and funds available, allocated, and spent.

The effectiveness of comprehensive plan design is enhanced at Kimberly-Clark by a receptive local education climate. The company's headquarters and its largest concentration of plan-eligible employees are at Neenah, Wisconsin, located in an area rich in education facilities. Strong emphasis has been put by EOP administrators on developing effective working relationships with schools and colleges in Wisconsin's Fox River Valley. In the words of one local educator, "Local educational institutions appreciate Kimberly-Clark's focus on making its employees aware of the community's education options."

Of a total Kimberly-Clark employment in the United States of just under 16,000, approximately 7,100 employees are eligible for benefits under the EOP: about 2,900 in managerial and professional positions, some 2,000 in clerical and technical (and comparable) positions, about 2,200 in hourly-rated positions. (The proportionately smaller number of covered hourly workers results from the fact that EOP does not now cover some 8,800 employees represented by unions which have chosen not to negotiate along these particular lines.)

Figures for the 1977 plan-year show a wide variation, so far as the KimEd program is concerned, between the use-rates for the managerial and the

clerical/technical groups (41.8% and 37% respectively) on the one hand, and hourly workers (9%) on the other. The participation rate of hourly workers in the FamEd component is also lower (about 21.7%) than for the other two groups (61.2% and 35.7%). Participation rates, apparently among all three eligible groups, are substantially higher at the Neenah operations than at those in other parts of the country.

Although these employee participation rates are commonly recognized as among the highest in the country, Kimberly-Clark officials consider their effort in this respect only partially successful or completed. The EOP is currently structured and projected on a significantly larger scale: the $550,000 actually used in the 1977 plan-year for the KimEd program compares with a total allotment and allocation for eligible employees of $3,500,000; of the $875,000 allocated to the FamEd account, only about $280,000 was actually paid out. Particular concern is expressed about the low rates of hourly employee participation in personal self-development activities (9% under KimEd). One EOP committee member comments: "It is very serious if you are offering a benefit that a worker cannot take advantage of. This leads to employee frustration with the plan and with the company. It is important to try to open the plan up more to hourly workers."

The record of both extraordinary innovation and comparatively high response at Kimberly-Clark since 1974 makes this an exceptionally valuable and informative "laboratory" for identifying some important elements, as well as some of still only conjectural importance, in stimulating widespread employee use of educational assistance programs. Although the available information is largely anecdotal, the thirty or so Rosow interviews with company officers, plan

administrators, and employees afford considerable illumination of the probable significance of various details of the Kimberly-Clark program. The provision for payment to employees in advance to cover the costs they will incur is generally credited as having had a major psychological effect in encouraging use of the KimEd program; and similarly of the decision not to check in any way on employees' performance in the courses.

The eligibility of many non-job-related courses under the EOP is also seen as encouraging employees to consider and use the benefit. The FamEd component of the plan attracts the participation of hourly employees in the savings program. The extensive administrative support system and comprehensive initial design has stood the EOP in good stead during its first five years of implementation.

Whatever may be the refined balance of importance here among the various elements in this program -- the extraordinary degree of top level corporate support, the care with which the program design has been worked out, completeness and efficiency of its administration, the advantages afforded by a successful company's being headquartered in an education-minded community -- the Kimberly-Clark experience goes a long way to neutralize the frequently expressed view that tuition assistance and broader worker education programs must be expected to mature and expand slowly. In less than five years the over-all EOP participation rate among eligible employees has gone up from about 1% in 1973 to over 30% in 1977; and among hourly workers, generally considered least likely to make use of such opportunities, the use-rates are now almost 10% in the tuition-assistance program and over 20% in the family educational saving plan. The traditional walls between "the two worlds of

education and work" are crumbling remarkably fast in Neenah, Wisconsin.

Polaroid Corporation

In December, 1957, at the annual meeting of employees, Dr. Edwin Land, founder, Chairman of the Board, and then President of the Polaroid Corporation, announced the formation of an Office of Career Growth and outlined a program including a Tuition Assistance Plan. The new office's broader charter was to provide assistance to interested Polaroid employees in identifying and achieving career goals appropriate for them and for the corporation. The original announcement included a commitment by the company to pay part of the costs of educational programs undertaken to achieve those goals.

Twenty-two years later, an employee summarizes the results of the 1957 Land initiative: "Education is just in the air at Polaroid."

The statistics back this up. Just about half of Polaroid's approximately 12,000 domestic employees are participating this year in one or more (averaging about 1-1/2) internal or external education and training programs provided or paid for, in full and with payment made in advance, by the company. Competition for places in two special programs combining extensive internal and external training and education is so stiff that only one out of each eight or ten applicants can be accommodated. So far as external courses alone are concerned, the participation rate is apparently about ten percent. The Polaroid program includes, however, an extensive practice of bringing various kinds of course offerings into the plant sites. The 50% figure covering both external and internal courses offers a fair comparison with the 3-to-5 percent average use-rate for most tuition-assistance programs.

It is a fair starting point for appraising the operation of Polaroid's

tuition-assistance and broader employee education plan to recognize the favorable context in which it has developed. Polaroid has been an unusually successful company financially, with the consequence, among others, that its workforce has expanded from approximately 2,000 employees in 1957 to 16,000 today. An unusually large proportion of the jobs at Polaroid require and make use of both sophisticated technical skills and a good general education. The company is committed to a general practice of internal promotion and a comprehensive job posting system is maintained. Polaroid's operations center is located in the Cambridge/Boston, Massachusetts area, in which all kinds of educational facilities are readily available. If an employee education program will work well anyplace, it ought to work in such a setting.

The Polaroid experience emerges from NMI investigator Knox' account, however, not as a story of something that just happened because of auspicious circumstances, but as a record of a development that has depended on both deep commitment and careful planning and execution. The Polaroid tuition assistance and broader employee education programs reveal a degree of integration, of the various interests involved and of implementation with purpose, that combines the best of both corporate and educational traditions.

Looking at the Tuition Assistance Plan alone, three specific features emerge as having had probably particular significance with respect to employee attitudes and therefore as bearing directly on employee participation roles. One is the company's eventual decision to pay <u>full</u> tuition costs, where it had earlier paid only part of them. A second is that these costs are paid in advance. (They must be refunded, though, if the employee fails the course or doesn't complete it.) The third is the so-called "equity provision" in the

Polaroid plan: hourly and salaried employees are entitled to the same tuition assistance benefits, to avoid or neutralize any implication of distinctions being made between the two groups.

So far as three other commonly emphasized factors are concerned, the Polaroid program is fully and constantly publicized and promoted among all employees; application procedures involve minimum employee effort and paperwork; and complete provision is made for consultation and advisement with interested individual employees.

These educational consultations are in fact required for all employees initiating an education program under the tuition assistance plan. But their purpose is recognized as being to make it as certain as possible that the individual involved is considering courses that will best serve his or her objectives and the interests of the company.

The courses for which tuition is paid don't have to be job-related, at least in any narrow sense. The listing of acceptable courses does include specific references to those that will improve the employee's skills on either the job currently held or those ahead of it in the same job family, and to courses relevant to a trade or craft licensing or certification program appropriate to the individual's career and related to the company's needs. Yet any basic course in reading, writing or arithmetic is covered, and so are courses leading to most associate, bachelor, and advanced degrees. The value to adults of remaining involved in the formal educational and learning process is consistently emphasized and recognized.

It is clear, at the same time, that not only the Tuition Assistance Plan but the broader education and training program is thought of primarily by both management and employees, in terms of advancement at Polaroid.

Interviews with eleven employees who had started as hourly workers at Polaroid reveal that eight of them have "broken rank" into salaried positions. "You can't get anywhere at Polaroid without education," was the refrain constantly repeated in these interviews. "You can see the payoff. People who have gotten education and assert themselves move up."

Underlying the Polaroid story, in addition to the continuing presence and influence of the company's founder, are the key factors of adequate budget and staff support for the educational program and the decision to broaden this program substantially beyond tuition assistance alone.

The 1978 expenditures for staff payroll and direct costs for Polaroid's corporate education and training activities (excluding Divisional training activities and employee's time away from the job) were $1.3 million dollars. The annual budget for the Tuition Assistance Plan alone is $450,000.

So far as structural organization is concerned, a Director of Human Resources, who reports to the Vice President for Personnel, is responsible for a group of offices which includes, among others, Tuition Assistance, Education and Career Planning and Skills Training. Each of these offices has its own administrator and includes adequate professional assistance.

Although a considerable number of Polaroid employees sign up each year for tuition assistance programs alone, these external education programs are intended to supplement other company-arranged courses: internal education and skill training programs, management and organizational development programs and workshops, technology-based programs and seminars, and career counseling workshops to assist both employees and supervisors in determining career goals and ways to achieve them.

In the three-year Trades Apprentice Program, open to all hourly employees with one year's seniority (and usually over-subscribed about 8-to-1), the trainees are given up to 300 hours of internal skill training and 700 to 900 additional hours of technical training at a company approved educational institution under the Tuition Assistance Plan -- with a guaranteed job in the skilled trade at Polaroid at the conclusion of the course. Thirty hourly workers selected each year from approximately 300 applicants for the Supervisor Training and Education Program spend approximately 240 hours per year for two years in internal training programs, and 120 hours each year in an external education program (with tuition assistance) at Boston University; upon "graduation," they are guaranteed supervisory positions.

There is over all an impressive maturity and sophistication about the Polaroid educational program. Both respective and mutual employer and employee interests in continuing employee education have been carefully identified and then met broadly but within recognized and respected limits. The "curriculum" of internal and external courses available to Polaroid employees is intended to take account of both company and individual needs, with respect to course arrangements as well as subject matter. "Tuition assistance" comes, at Polaroid, less cafeteria-style than as a planned, integrated offering to be accepted through a deliberate, shared decision-making process. The participation rate (in one phase or another of the broader educational program) -- about 50% -- reflects employee opinion regarding the plan's effectiveness. Company officers count it a high return investment. If this leaves room for other appropriate appraisal, it could only be that here is solid evidence that employment and education, including fairly

formal education, have perhaps quite a lot to offer each other.

District Council 37, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

The worker education program established through collective bargaining between the City of New York and District Council 37 of AFSCME is administered almost entirely by the union. It is another success story, at least by the measure of substantial participation, and some interesting parallels emerge between the experience at District Council 37 and that at Kimberly-Clark and Polaroid.

The current agreement between the City and District Council 37 calls for annual contributions by the City to an "Education Fund" of $25 per employee for the majority of city employees represented by DC37. This means about 76,000 employees, so the Fund contributions total approximately $2 million per year. Although city officials retain nominal controls over the program, virtually full responsibility for its design and administration is exercised by a Board of Trustees comprised of two union officers and five members and by an extensive staff headed up by an Administrator, Associate Administrator, and Comptroller.

The program developed by the Board and Staff of the Education Fund is a combination of tuition-aid arrangements for eligible union members who want to take courses in various New York City educational institutions and of courses provided, mostly in the evenings and on Saturday mornings, in the ten-story building in lower Manhattan that also houses the District Council's headquarters. The union has also contracted with the College of New Rochelle (CNR) to have a special "campus" set up by the College in this

same building. Though CNR/District Council 37 is technically not part of the union "Ed Fund," many of its students finance their courses at the College through the Fund's Tuition Refund program.

Statistical analysis of the use being made of the Ed Fund offerings is virtually impossible. While numerical data are kept and are available with respect to certain Fund programs, this is not true with respect to others. One Fund staff member estimates that the Fund serves "about 3,000 students a week," while another speculates that the annual participation rate is "over 10 percent" (among the 76,000 eligible employees). What is important here, however, is that the limiting factor on the use-rate in the tuition-refund and other Educational Fund programs provided by DC37 is the amount of money available for and from the Education Fund. Many of the courses offered are over-subscribed. Announcement of them is sometimes deliberately restrained in order to minimize disappointment. In an attempted analysis of what contributes to high use-rates in programs such as these, the DC37 experience must be viewed as one of the few in the country where employee interests exceed available opportunities.

The composition of the DC37 Education Fund clientele is important, particularly for the testing it permits of some of the common assumptions about tuition-assistance plan users: that they are characteristically, for example, better educated to begin with, relatively better off financially, on professional or supervisory or managerial career ladders, and already doing pretty well. Although the data regarding Education Fund members (who comprise about 70% of the DC37 membership) do not permit any complete or direct correlation of individual characteristics and Ed Fund use, the evidence

is relatively clear that these common assumptions don't apply in this particular instance.

A 1973 survey showed that 60% of DC37 members didn't go on to college, and almost a fifth of them didn't finish high school. Very high interest is reported in both the Fund's High School Equivalency Program and periodic courses which prepare members for particular civil service tests. Many of the other general education courses are comparable to those offered in the first years of college.

The 1973 figures also showed 65% of the DC37 members earning less than $16,000 a year and 40% less than $12,000. A more recent (1978) analysis of members eligible to use the Education Fund shows that about half are in administrative and clerical occupations and a substantial number work in hospitals. For various reasons, very few employees in either professional or blue collar jobs (often the higher-paying positions) are covered by the Fund benefits. NMI reporter Shore's interviews with a substantial number of students, as well as the comments of Fund officials, suggest that a majority of Fund users are clerical and hospital workers who are often in lower-economic-status positions.

Another common assumption is that tuition-assistance participation varies fairly directly with the prosperity of the employer enterprise and the consequent prospect of employee promotion as a reward for educational and training effort. New York City, however, has been and is in a serious economic crunch. There are clear signs of a search for job mobility as a strong motivational force in the DC37 Education Fund program, but this may be as much a matter of outward as well as upward mobility; and there are indications of other motivations as well.

The view is strongly expressed by DC37 representatives, Education Fund administrators, and users of the program that one key element in the plan's success is the union members' feeling that this is their own program, designed and administered by the union to meet the members' felt and expressed interests and needs. The union leadership has actively encouraged members to use the Ed Fund opportunities available to them.

The location of the education and training facilities and the scheduling arrangements for the courses are unquestionably important here. Where other tuition aid programs usually involve the employees going to schools and colleges someplace else, the DC37 program brings the courses very close to employee's workplaces. The union headquarters in lower Manhattan are within walking or easy subway distance of where many DC37 members work. Most of the courses meet there in the evening, so that they can be attended right after work. Others are scheduled for Saturday mornings and weekdays. Special provision is made to meet the needs of employees who work evening or night shifts.

The present pattern of educational and training courses evolved from the Council's promotion in 1967 of an upgrading program for nurse's aides who were training to become Licensed Practical Nurses. The City and DC37 worked together on this, and federal funding was obtained. Over 400 nurse's aides were prepared to take the state licensing exam which is part of the requirement for entering this profession. In the same year, a test Preparation Program was begun which enabled members to prepare for Civil Service tests at no cost. In 1968, after the union council had established the position of Education Director, classes were established to meet the expressed interests of

1400 union members who had not finished high school and who indicated that they wanted to prepare themselves for high school equivalency certificates as part of their effort to qualify for job promotions.

Those first three programs reflected what became and have remained key elements in the DC37 initiative. It has been directed primarily, though by no means exclusively, at relatively low income employees with comparatively limited previous education. Many of the courses have been designed to meet specific needs, such as the taking of civil service tests these employees come to as they move up career ladders. The curriculum has been developed and expanded very largely on the basis of interests clearly expressed by potential users of the program.

The program is well publicized as far as its general outlines are concerned, most particularly through extensive coverage in the Public Employee Press, DC37's union publication.

"The counseling department," the Associate Director of the Fund reports, "is the heart of the Education Fund. Somehow everyone uses counseling, whether group or individual." New York University consultants brought in to develop a counseling model for the union made recommendations which have resulted in setting up a staff of one full-time and five part-time counselors; they vary in age and ethnic background, and three are union members who have gone through the experience of returning to school after being away from it for a long time.

It may be one of the most sensitive and effective elements in the DC37 education program that while this counseling includes traditional education advisement it is also designed deliberately to take account of the "going back

to school trauma." This has meant extensive use of group counseling, which gives the employee/students an opportunity to get over their feelings of strangeness about this going back to school by sharing experiences. The implications and repercussions of this experience at home (about three quarters of Ed Fund members are women; about half are married; about half, too, have dependents) are brought into the counseling. A special effort is also made to work the counseling element into the courses that are offered, so as to minimize overly sensitive reactions to "counseling and guidance" itself.

Any attempted net appraisal of the District Council 37 education program has to be subjective, and any purported analysis of its dynamics reserved. Little time has been spent by its administrators on keeping enrollment records and the program is being constantly revised to meet changing demands and circumstances. What may be its greatest strengths, the personalization of the course offerings and the accompanying counseling, for example, contribute at the same time to the difficulty of objective evaluation.

Accepting, however, the estimate of a 10% participation rate, the DC37 record appears to be about like that for comparable employee groups at Polaroid and Kimberly-Clark, and way above the national average. Enthusiasm runs high among those associated with the New York City program as administrators, teachers, students. The very fact of basic difference in administrative structure and style and at least superficial motivations gives special significance to the important parallels that emerge not only in the apparent results but in the practices that appear to contribute to those results.

The District Council 37 experience is most fairly viewed as important verification of the potential that lies in union involvement in building educational opportunity into the employment relationship.

III. SOME COMMON DENOMINATORS?

Generalization from these or any other three cases about either the overall potential of tuition-aid programs or about the policies and practices that will contribute to the effectiveness of such programs must necessarily be restrained. So many variables are involved that a professionally skeptical researcher would find little here, particularly in the absence of "control groups," to go on. Even the measure of success principally relied on in this study -- a percentage participation rate -- has obvious limitations in the absence of longer range analysis of the effects of such participation.

Yet the worse mistake would be to ignore or even to play down the apparent portents of cases such as these three or the almost obvious parallels in the instruction they offer. If half or a quarter of those who do America's work were also engaged in some form or other of formal education, it would amount to a minor but significant economic and social revolution; and the fairest reading of the Kimberly-Clark and Polaroid and District Council 37 records is that everything in all three of them suggests strongly that what has happened there could happen almost everyplace else. Nor are these three cases by any means unique in already developing American experience. So the apparent common denominators in these three experiences are appropriately noted, even though the effect of particular policies and practices can be neither entirely isolated nor scientifically "proved."

The roles played at Kimberly-Clark by Darwin Smith and at Polaroid by Edwin Land contribute to the temptation to identify the root element of success in such programs in overly personalized terms. This diminishes their contribution. They were pioneers who helped open a frontier but who would insist that there are no indispensable individuals, no magicians, in this business. The real lesson here, reflected in a different form at District Council 37, is that the worker education idea depends for its effectiveness on full and continuing commitment to it in an office that carries authority and influence. The perhaps even more critical corollary is that this commitment becomes meaningful only as it is carried to the point of establishing and maintaining a sufficient staff to design and administer a program that requires a good deal of on-going leadership effort.

Although the importance of provision for adequate financing of such a program is obvious, it is significant that this factor doesn't appear to be central to the discussions or reports at any of the three sites reviewed here. The District Council 37 administrators indicate that with larger funding the course offerings could be broader and more interested students accommodated. On the other hand, the Kimberly-Clark program, apparently of comparable scale and involving comparable financing, shows an excess of fund allocations over actual use. If there is common instruction here it involves the importance of funding for administrative as well as for program costs.

The perhaps most basic suggestion in these three experiences is that a tuition-assistance program is probably going to be most effective, attracting

the widest employee interest, if it is part of a broader worker education initiative. Although the KimEd (tuition assistance) and FamEd programs at Kimberly-Clark are separate and are independent of each other, the two are promoted and administered together, and interest in the one is apparently engendered along with that in the other. At District Council 37, the various courses are offered in a wide variety of "tuition assistance" and "free course" forms, with a college campus being brought to the union headquarters. The Polaroid plan is perhaps most distinctively characterized by its integration of external with internal education and training opportunities.

The question arises in this connection whether what is involved here includes the necessity of affirmatively stimulating an employee interest that is perhaps most characteristically too little developed to be asserted to any considerable extent in response to offerings, tuition-assistance for example, that are simply laid on the table. These three cases don't establish this. They nevertheless have it in common that in each of these instances considerable affirmative action has been taken by those in charge, including the development of fairly broad education and training curricula and the undertaking on a staff basis of considerable promotional and support activities.

It is not, however, that anything here suggests that a worker education program offers little or no promise unless it is established on the broad scale that specifically characterizes these three cases. To the contrary. All three had modest beginnings, and in all of them the tuition-assistance arrangements have been from the start and continue to be key elements in the program. What is perhaps most valuable is the comparatively common pattern here of changes that have been made in the original tuition-

assistance programs with apparently consequential and substantial expansion of the use made of them.

Two related points, one perhaps involving a specific application of the other, emerge. These have to do with the extensions of tuition assistance programs to cover non-job-related courses (although this leaves questions of interpretation of these terms), and the broader point of the implications of the balance that is established between employee and employer interests in these programs.

In the commonplace meaning of the terms, all three of the plans reviewed here cover, but within limits, non-job-related as well as job-related courses. They don't include (except with respect to courses under the broader FamEd plan at Kimberly-Clark and two or three exceptional instances at DC37) what might be considered "frill" or purely personal recreational or very broadly "cultural" courses. There is, however, strong emphasis in all three programs on both basic educational courses (the three R's and the elements of high school equivalency certification) and on preparation for baccalaureate and advanced college degrees -- evidence perhaps of recognition that good basic and general education is important to doing most jobs well.

The broader question, regarding whether it is the employers' or the employees' interests that are to be principally consulted and recognized, is equally elusive. Although it is hard to separate the two sets of interests in

any definitive way, the qeustion shouldn't be dismissed. The NMI preliminary survey of the broader tuition-aid terrain indicates that one of the commonest reservations employers have about these programs involves concerns about the idea (and the cost effectiveness) of spending money to up-grade employees' competencies only to have them use the advantage of this to get a job some-place else. This often leads to companies limiting their tuition assistance offer to external courses involving training closely related to an applicant's current job or to one in the immediate job family.

No such concern whatsoever is reflected in the Kimberly-Clark or DC37 programs, and it is dismissed at Polaroid. In all three situations, deliberate and strong emphasis is placed on employees' stakes in the programs. The essential dynamic of the DC37 program is probably the employees' feeling that this is "their" program; the union runs it, and most of the courses provided are those the prospective students have said they want to take. At Kimberly-Clark, a deliberate point is made of not relating the educational program there to absenteeism or turnover rates; and yet company representatives express the clear conviction that it results in attracting superior job applicants and that rising corporate earnings are consequences, in part, of increased productivity. The obvious underlying and freely articulated assumption at Polaroid is that the program is cost-effective and income-producing in the toughest-minded terms. In all three cases, however, the considerable public rhetoric regarding these programs is characterized by plainly sincere emphasis on the value to individuals, corporations, and community alike of employees having an opportunity to continue to develop their capacities and personalities as human beings.

It emerges as a probably critical factor in the development of a high participation rate in a tuition-aid program that it be framed and planned to put primary emphasis on its contribution to employee and human interests. So far as any limitation to job-relatedness of the courses is concerned, the instruction of these three experiences is that what is important here is the recognition of the relevance of education, perhaps also the less direct relevance of an opportunity to pursue education, to almost all jobs.

So far as the administrative aspects of tuition-assistance programs are concerned, the three cases reviewed here reflect a consistent pattern of recognition that positive administrative action is probably essential to break the centuries-old tradition that after you go to work you don't go back to school. It isn't that the need isn't felt, or even that the "market" here has to be developed -- although custom may have had some of these superficial effects. It is rather, though, that the meaningfulness and potential of this new opportunity is not going to be either clear or realized from just a paragraph written into an employee handbook or a collective bargaining agreement.

Very considerable attention has been paid in developing the three programs reviewed here to constant publicizing of the new opportunities that have been made available. Extensive use has been made of announcements on bulletin boards and in various publications, and at Kimberly-Clark and Polaroid through supervisors' suggestions and encouragement.

At both companies, the change from paying only part of the tuition costs involved to paying the full costs is credited with stimulating the use of the programs substantially; and similarly of the decisions eventually made to advance employees the funds required for course enrollment. Costs other than

tuition are also covered, particularly at Kimberly-Clark. The situation at District 37 is such that little or no cash outlay is required so far as the participants are concerned. To the limited extent that time off is provided by the two companies (but rarely by the City of New York) for taking outside courses, this has apparently provided a substantial inducement.

Emphasis has been placed in the administration of all three plans on simplifying the enrollment and admission procedures.

The employee "counseling and guidance" or "educational advisement" procedures that are established emerge from all three of these experiences as being of probably critical importance and as having a variety of potential implications. The basic purposes of these procedures are to help interested applicants handle what might otherwise be discouraging enrollment technicalities, and to facilitate the applicants' identifying those specific courses that will most closely fit their needs and whatever broader considerations are involved. At Polaroid, a deliberate and concerted effort is made to use those opportunities as the basis for encouraging employees to develop thoughtfully considered individual career plans, using whatever they care to of the professional advice afforded by the counselors. At District Council 37, the counseling function has been expanded to include the implications of returning as an adult to the formal educational experience and the matter of personal adjustment to the experience.

It is an interesting but fairly futile exercise to try to trace the apparent influence in these three programs of including some form of recognition or even reward by the employer of employee performance in the outside courses. Education Fund administrators at District Council 37 count it important that City personnel officials have agreed to include in employees' personnel files

a record of their completion of college programs. At Kimberly-Clark, on the other hand, the feeling is that advantage is gained by not following up to determine what "grades" are earned or even whether the courses were completed. The Polaroid system includes guarantees of promotion to skilled craft occupations or supervisory positions or, under a new program, to engineering and scientific positions, upon the completion of certain prescribed combinations of external courses and on-the-job training, and yet the principal emphasis there is on the more general advantages that come from employees both increasing their skills and broadening out their education.

What emerges clearly from the three programs is the broad common instruction that if the employee education idea is taken seriously, if tuition assistance is made part of a broader education and training program, if provision is made for a staff function adequate to supply initiative which is apparently not going to develop among very many employees individually -- then a substantial degree of participation, with apparently significant consequences, will result.

IV. IN OTHER SETTINGS

How broad is the promise of these three cases? Is it that an effective tuition-reimbursement and worker education program can be developed wherever there is adequate commitment to the idea? Or are there special combinations of circumstances in these two companies and in this union that are particularly conducive to the success of such plans?

Despite the emphasis at Polaroid and Kimberly-Clark and in District Council 37 on the roles played by company or (in New York City) by union leaders, the suggestion that it takes a rare and fortuitous combination of humanism and

tough-mindedness at the top of an organization to make something of this kind work isn't persuasive. Neither is the suggestion sometimes made that the Polaroid and Kimberly-Clark plans work well because these companies are doing so well financially that promotions can be offered as rewards for employee self-development efforts; this doesn't fit the New York City situation, and officers at the two companies suggest freely that the success of these programs has almost certainly contributed to broader corporate achievement.

Full recognition is given in these three reports to the availability of unusually attractive and varied educational facilities in the Neenah, Wisconsin, Cambridge/Boston, and New York City areas. Yet especially with the recent extension of the community college system it seems reasonable to conclude that adequate arrangements for external training and education courses can be worked out almost anywhere in the country. The critical point here is whether plan administrators assume responsibility for making those contacts with the schools that will increase the likelihood of employees using them and of their getting into the courses that will best meet the needs and interests involved.

It would be wrong to conclude from these three cases that comparable results can be expected from all tuition-assistance programs, just as it would be a mistake to consider even these three as having reached ultimate pinnacles of worker education purpose. Although these participation rates has been raised to probably five to ten times the rates for comparable groups of employees in the country as a whole and in plans receiving less thoughtful and committed attention, there is still, though, a sufficient difference between the use-rates of various groups of employees to leave real concern about involving in these programs those individuals for whom they would mean the

most and whose better training and fuller education would perhaps mean most to the employer.

It is essential to recognize, too, that all three of these cases involve sufficiently large groups of employees to warrant the development of broad-gauge, well-staffed programs. These programs suggest strongly the advantages that accrue from making a tuition-aid plan one part of a broad employee education and training curriculum. Yet to list the principal characteristics of these particular initiatives is to realize that virtually all of them suggest smaller scale and partial replications: wide publicization of whatever opportunities are afforded; covering not only tuition but also incidental costs, and paying for them in advance; providing encouragement in one form or another, especially through supervisory channels; making even minimal arrangements with the academic and training institutions in the area; simplifying enrollment and reimbursement procedures; giving careful thought to the coverage of non job-related as well as job-related courses, to the relationship of general education to most jobs, and to the question of whether a tuition-aid program is intended to serve employer, employee, or perhaps inextricably inter-related and mutual interests.

The most serious shortcoming in the record afforded by these three cases is that the explicit measure of "success" being used is primarily, so far, a counting of the percentages of participants. There is the sense -- clearly at Polaroid, strongly at Kimberly-Clark, vaguely in the case of New York -- that these are sound, high-yield, net-cost-reducing investments. There haven't been, though, the follow-ups or analyses that would most solidly confirm this. It remains to demonstrate more fully, in order to enlarge the persuasiveness of these precedents, what is so far only assumed: that such investments of employer

funds and employee time enhance the returns and values and satisfactions on both sides of the employment equation.

The real reason, though, for restrained reaction here is that these tuition-aid and broader worker education developments, especially as they are reflected in cases such as these three, appear to offer such almost limitless prospect that the most serious danger may be in expecting too much from them too quickly. It is hard even to conceive of the changes that might come, in terms of everything from productivity per person hour to people's higher use of the human experience, from breaking out of the time-trap illusion that education is for youth and work for adults and never shall the two overlap. It has been a mistake to assume that the "bridges between the two worlds of education and work" are properly built only from the school side of the gap. Worker education, including tuition-assistance as part of its curriculum, could be as important a development in the 1980's as the community colleges were in the 1960's -- or even as the land grant colleges were a century ago.

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